MY QUEEN

A WEEKLY JOURNAL FOR YOUNG WOMEN

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MARION MARLOWE'S NOBLE WORK

OR

THE TRAGEDY AT THE HOSPITAL

BY GRACE SHIRLEY

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CHAPTER I.

A TRIO OF DOCTORS.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons, or the "P. & S.," as it is usually called, had just graduated a large class of promising young doctors, and the morning after the commencement exercises the big building looked deserted. As Dr. Reginald Brookes, a handsome young man of twenty-two, passed down the steps, dress suit case in hand, he came face to face with two of his classmates.

"Hello, doc. What did you get, Charity or Bellevue? I hear you competed," called one of the young doctors.

"Neither one," said Dr. Brookes, with a smile of amusement. "I got a berth in the Penitentiary, Greenaway!"

"Oh, that's too bad!" said Dr. Fielding, a pleasant-faced gentleman. "You'll rust in that place—they never have anything interesting! Why, the best you will see will be a few contusions and a case of cholera morbus or eczema of some kind."

Reginald Brookes still smiled, although he knew his friend was speaking truthfully.

"I'm going to Bellevue, and I'm mighty glad of it," said Fielding, enthusiastically. "For if there is anything going they get it at Bellevue."

"Yes, they catch it all, there," was Dr. Greenaway's answer, "and it's not so far from the world as the Island, either."

"Then there's any number of pretty nurses to flirt with," he said, laughing. "No lack of either fun or work in the wards of old Bellevue."

"I'm sorry for you, Brookes," exclaimed Dr. Fielding again. "Why, you poor chap, you'll hardly see a pretty face where you are going, for I understand that the prison women do about all the nursing."

"Yes, 'Big Belle, the Confidence Queen,' is head nurse there now, I believe," laughed Brookes, "or at least she is guardian of the woman's ward just at present. I expect I'll have to leave my watch and money outside when I go on duty. She might try her skill on me, just to keep in practice."

"Well, I am sorry for you, doc; still it is better than no berth at all," said Greenaway, sadly, "I didn't get a thing, and I'm the poorest man in the college."

"By Jove, that's too bad!" said Reginald Brookes, with feeling. "But, say, what are you going to do; you can't go into general practice without capital."

Fred Greenaway shrugged his shoulders and frowned slightly.

"I used up all I had on my education," he said, briefly, "but I'll catch on to something. I'm not worrying about it."

Dick Fielding rushed away at that moment in answer to a call from a friend, and in a flash Dr. Brookes put his hand on Greenaway's shoulder.

"Let me lend you five thousand to start with, old chap! I can do it as well as not, and you can give me an I. O. U. for security."

Fred Greenaway looked up at the handsome fellow in amazement.

"Great Cæsar! Do you mean that, doc?" he asked, excitedly.

"Certainly," said young Brookes, briefly, as he drew a check book from his pocket. "Why the deuce didn't you tell me you were hard up before. I thought you considered me your friend, you rascal!"

Fred Greenaway did not speak for the space of a minute. Such generosity as this was totally unknown to him, and just at this time it was doubly and trebly grateful.

"I guess I should have gone to the wall in spite of my grit," he said slowly, as Brookes folded and handed him the check. "I haven't five dollars in my pocket this minute, and as there wasn't a ghost of a show in sight for me to practice my profession, I was starting out to apply for a job as motorman on a street car, or something of that sort."

"Let me know how you get on," said Brookes, as he waited for the I. O. U. that Greenaway was scribbling. "I'll be on the Island for a year, I suppose, unless I find, as Fielding says, that I am actually rusting."

"But why do you go there, Brookes?" asked his friend, rather anxiously. "With your money, what is to hinder your going straight into practice?"

Reginald Brookes did not answer the question immediately; he appeared to be a little embarrassed.

"I'll tell you, Fred!" he blurted out finally, "but don't give me away, old man, or the boys will say I lack ambition; but the fact is I'm in love—desperately in love, and it is with a sweet little nurse who is 'on probation' in Charity."

"I see," said Greenaway, with a smile of amusement. "And you can't bear the idea of having the East River roll between you! Well, I don't know that I blame you, doc, for after all, what's the good of money if you can't be independent!"

"It is just this way," said Brookes, seriously, as the two friends started slowly up Fifty-ninth street. "She is a beautiful girl, a country lass, and fresh as a daisy. I'm sure I don't know how she can endure that place, but she is determined to stay there and take care of those poor wretches, and some way I thought she would be happier if I went over and helped her."

"Oh, how generous we are!" said Greenaway, laughing. "You mean you knew you would be happier on Blackwell's Island with her than you would on Fifth avenue with any other woman."

"I see you know how it is," said young

Brookes, with a grin of sympathy. "You are in love yourself, old boy, or you couldn't speak so feelingly."

"I admit it," said Greenaway, a sad look crossing his face. "I'm in love all right, but that is all the good it will ever do me."

"Who is she?" asked Brookes, with a sudden keen interest.

The frown deepened on Greenaway's face and his voice fell lower as he answered: "Her name is May Osgood, and she is an actress," he said, slowly. "I have loved her for some time—I can't seem to get over it."

That there was a reason why he should get over it was very apparent by his words, but Reginald Brookes was too cultured to dream of asking his secret.

"Well, my little sweetheart is only seventeen," he said gayly, "and, between you and I, she has not accepted me yet, so you see I have a double reason for wishing to be near her."

As they parted at the L station, Greenaway spoke rather suddenly.

"I'll turn my life insurance over to you if anything happens, Reg; but, by the way, what is your sweetheart's name? I seem to have a feeling that I ought to know it."

Reginald Brookes glanced at him in a little surprise.

"Her name is Marion Marlowe," he said, very slowly, then, as Greenaway ran up the stairs, he looked after him curiously.

"He's a funny chap," he muttered, uneasily. "Now, why the deuce did he feel that he ought to know my little sweetheart's name? Confound the fellow! He has no business with such feelings!"

CHAPTER II.

A WORD OF WARNING.

Augustus Atherton, attorney-at-law, was seated in his office looking over some papers.

Suddenly he tapped a bell upon his desk and his office-boy entered.

"Tell Sands to bring me a copy of Halstead's testimony, Bob," he said, shortly, "and tell him to hurry; I want it this minute!"

"Mr. Sands is out to lunch, sir, won't be back for half an hour," said the boy, respectfully, "but Miss Marlowe has the copy; shall I tell her to bring it?"

"Yes, at once," said the lawyer, wheeling around in his chair.

In less than a minute his "typewriter girl" entered the office.

"Here is the paper, sir," said a sweet, low voice.

Mr. Atherton looked up and then stared a little. It was the first time he had really taken a good look at the new copyist.

The young girl who stood before him was very beautiful. She had a sweet, oval face, lighted by violet eyes, and her rippling golden hair shone like threads of sunshine.

Her figure was plump, but exceedingly graceful, and every curve was enhanced by the charming simplicity of her garments.

"Oh, thank you!" he said politely, as she laid the papers upon the desk, and at the same time he looked admiringly at her small white hand and taper fingers.

"You copy very neatly and accurately, Miss Marlowe," he said quickly, as she was about to turn respectfully and leave him.

"Thank you, sir," said the beautiful girl, blushing. "I am very glad, indeed, that I please you. It is my first position and I am naturally a little nervous."

"You have never worked in an office before, then," said the old lawyer, glancing her over critically. "Well, you are doing nicely, and Sands tells me you are very rapid."

"I do manage the typewriter very easily, sir," said the young girl, smiling, "and I am studying very hard. I shall soon be a stenographer."

"Then I'll have you in here where I can dictate to you," said the lawyer, quickly

"By Jove! What a treat that will be after two years of Miss Dixon!"

His extraordinary manner astonished the girl a little, but after a moment of embarrassment she managed to stammer:

"Oh, but I may never be as proficient as Miss Dixon; she takes notes like lightning, while I can only write fifty words a minute."

"Well, I could talk slower," said the lawyer, slyly, giving her another sharp look over his glasses.

Dollie Marlowe smiled, but she was considerably puzzled. It was the longest conversation that she had had with her employer.

For she had only been working two weeks, and it was the first position of any kind that she had ever occupied.

She was only seventeen, but quite large for her age, and up to a few months before had always lived in the country.

As she bowed politely to the lawyer and hurried away from his desk, she could not help wondering if he had guessed just how green and simple she was, and whether his words were intended for anything more than kindly encouragement.

When she reached the little office where her typewriter stood, Dollie went on with her work as steadily as ever, but more than once she caught herself thinking of her employer's words and wondering if he really did want her to sit in his office.

Dollie Marlowe's life in the city had not been without its experiences, and at times there was a cloud on the fair girl's brow as though some of those experiences had been woefully bitter.

She rarely said anything about her own life, but the name of her twin sister was frequently on her lips, and this sister was now a nurse in Charity Hospital.

"My sister Marion is as beautiful as a saint," she had told Miss Dixon. "She has magnificent gray eyes and such a queenly air. Oh, I could talk forever and not tell half of Marion's virtues!"

"If she is prettier than you are she must be beautiful," Miss Dixon had said, honestly. She was one of the few plain women who could see beauty in others and admit it.

She came into the little office while Dollie was working, only a few minutes after the talk with Mr. Atherton.

"There is a boy out in the hall looking for you, Miss Marlowe," she said, pleasantly, "and I should judge by his looks that he had some important news. Oh, no, not bad news, I am sure!" she added, as she saw the change in Dollie's face. "He was grinning and showing every tooth in his head. A mighty nice-looking boy, too; perhaps he is your sweetheart."

"My sweetheart is not a boy, Miss Dixon," said Dollie, proudly. "He is twenty years old and is a bookkeeper at a good salary. This must be Bert Jackson, one of my old neighbors in the country."

She rose from her machine and hurried out into the hall. Sure enough, there stood Bert, very impatient, but still grinning.

"I just dropped in to tell you the good news," said Bert, as quick as he saw her. "I've been adopted by a rich man, and I'm to have my choice of a future profession."

"Oh, Bert, how lovely!" cried Dollie, enthusiastically. She could hardly believe that such good fortune had befallen him.

"His name is Captain Hobart, and he's a millionaire, I am told," went on Bert. "I used to always wait on him at the store where I worked, and he tells me he took a fancy to me because of my good manners. How Matt Jenkins, the keeper of the Poor Farm, would swear if he could hear that," he said, roguishly. "That's doing pretty well for an orphan boy to be adopted by a millionaire, isn't it, Dollie?"

"Oh, it's just beautiful!" cried Dollie, in genuine delight. "Oh, I just wish all of the boys from the Poor Farm could have such a chance! Marion will be overjoyed to hear of it, Bert. I shall write to her this evening and tell her about it."

"I've done that already," was Bert's prompt reply. "You didn't suppose I'd let her hear it second-hand, did you? And, by the way, Dollie, I've got a secret for your ears. It has just come to me lately, and I'm as happy as a lark. I'm going straight ahead to make love to Marion. She's the dearest girl I know, and I'm going to ask her to marry me."

"Oh, Bert!"

This was all that Dollie could say. She was quite overcome with astonishment at this matter-of-fact announcement.

"Well, why shouldn't I," asked Bert, in an injured tone. "Of course I don't expect her to marry me now, but as soon as I am educated and have plenty of 'dough' I don't see any reason why she shouldn't like me."

Dollie Marlowe burst out laughing, in spite of Bert's seriousness.

"But don't you know that Marion has two lovers already?" she asked, gayly. "Why, she'll have time to marry both of them before you are old enough to ask her."

"I'm as old as she is, and I'll take chances on that," said Bert, coolly; "but I say, Dollie, who the mischief is this bald-headed old duffer?"

"Hush!" whispered the girl in horror, as she saw who was coming. "That is Mr. Atherton, my honorable employer."

"Honorable fiddlesticks!" said Bert, staring straight at the gentleman. "Look out for him, Dollie; I don't like his style. He's too smooth to be real healthy, and you know I must protect you, if you are going to be my sister."

CHAPTER III.

MARION ARRIVES JUST IN TIME.

At exactly noon the day after Bert Jackson's warning, Miss Dixon sat alone in the private office.

She had been taking dictation all the morning, and was a trifle weary.

"It is very strange," she said to herself. "Mr. Atherton is not in the habit of taking his typewriter to lunch with him, and I have been here two years and never received an invitation."

Bob Day, the office boy, came in with some papers. There was a grin on his face as he laid them on the desk.

"He's mashed on her, sure pop!" he said, with great jubilation. "You just ought to seen him smirk at her when they went down in the elevator."

"Nonsense!" said Miss Dixon, sharply. "You must be mistaken, Bob. Mr. Atherton was never known to take one of us to luncheon."

"Oh, well, you ain't all got her style," said the boy, unfeelingly. "Why, Miss Marlowe is a peach! She's got all of us stuck on her."

"Much good will it do her," said Miss Dixon, sadly. "She's too pretty for her own good—that's what I've often told her."

"She'll wear diamonds if she sticks to me," sang out Bob, as he went noisily out of the office.

Just outside in the hall he met a beautiful young girl. She had chestnut hair and large, flashing gray eyes, and carried her head and shoulders regally.

"Did you want ter see Mr. Atherton?" asked Bob, quickly. He had seen that she was a stranger, and he was the guardian of the office.

"I am looking for Miss Marlowe, his typewriter," said the beautiful girl, sweetly.

"Miss Marlowe is my twin sister, and I am in a great hurry to see her."

The boy glanced up at the clock in the hall.

"Sorry, miss, but she is out to lunch," he said, briefly. "Won't be back for at least two hours, I reckon."

"What! Does my sister spend so much time over her luncheon as that?" asked the young girl, in astonishment.

"Well, not usually," was the answer, in a drawling voice, "but she's out with the boss to-day, you see, so I give 'em two hours. They can't get back no sooner."

Marion Marlowe gasped at this bit of information, but she controlled herself perfectly in the presence of this youngster.

"Do you happen to know where they went?" she said, pleasantly, at the same time handing the boy a bright half dollar.

"He'd kill me if he knew I told," Bob said, as he pocketed the money, "but it's either the Astor House or Moquin's in Fulton street, miss. If 'twas me, I'd go to the Astor House first. It's nicer over there and not so far as the other."

Marion thanked him and turned away, with a curious feeling at her heart. There was something in the boy's news that worried her sadly.

"I seen 'em cuttin' across the Park," muttered Bob, after she had gone, "but she can't say I told her. I said either one or t'other."

As the beautiful young girl picked her way across Park Row, more than one person stared at her. There was a freshness and stateliness about her that is not often seen in city maidens.

As yet the country bloom was still dyeing her cheeks, and the marvelous whiteness of her skin was good to behold.

She had passed through many trials since she came to the city, acting the part of heroine on several occasions, yet each time withdrawing herself and her noble deeds as rapidly as possible into the background.

"I can't understand it," she whispered, as she hurried across the Park. "Oh, my poor little sister; how thoughtless she is! Why, it would break Ralph Moore's heart if he thought Dollie was fickle."

Ralph Moore was Dollie's sweetheart, and they were to be married soon—just as soon as Ralph's position admitted of the change—and Marion already loved him as she would her own brother.

She knew that Dollie was only a child in heart, the baby of the family, and very unsophisticated, but she had not believed that she would be so really careless of Ralph's feelings as to accept attention from her employer. Marion was thinking deeply as she reached Broadway, but as she stepped on the crossing she paused to look about her.

Not ten feet away she saw one of the new automobile carriages, and as she glanced at it carelessly she recognized one of the occupants.

It was George Colebrook, a man whom she had reason to despise, for he had played the traitor in a love affair with her dear friend, Alma Allyn, and such actions as this always shocked her pure nature.

He was looking straight at her with an ugly gleam in his eyes, and Marion noticed that his companion was a flashily dressed woman.

"He hates me, I believe," thought Marion to herself, "and all because I showed him how I loathed him. If looks could kill, I should certainly die this minute, and yet that black hearted fellow once dared to make love to me! Oh, how I despise such treacherous creatures!"

When Marion reached the Astor House dining-room, she stood perfectly still and looked around.

A dozen people turned their heads and commented on her beauty.

Dollie and her employer were not there, so Marion made her way to the parlor. The instant she looked in, she saw Dollie sitting by the window.

Marion walked over to her quickly and put her hand on her shoulder.

With a little scream of surprise, Dollie turned and looked at her; the next second they were hugging and kissing each other.

There was only one person besides themselves in the parlor just then, so for a minute the girls talked freely, but in low tones so as not to attract attention.

"But, sister, what are you doing here?" asked Marion, after a little. "I went to the office and could not find you, and the office boy told me you were lunching with your employer."

"I wonder how he knew?" remarked Dollie, innocently. "Why, I came out five minutes before him and waited at the elevator. That boy is very impudent to be watching us," she added.

"And your employer is very thoughtless to invite you out with him," said Marion, stoutly. "A man of his age ought to know better, Dollie."

"But he did not mean anything by it, Marion," said Dollie, quickly. "Why, he is as nice as he can be, and he's almost as old as father."

"That is what I said; he is old enough to know better," said Marion, grimly; "but here he comes, Dollie; I know him by your description."

"Yes, here he comes," repeated the fair-haired girl, gayly, "and I do so hope he has arranged everything satisfactorily. He is going to take me to a matinee, and I'll make him take you, too. He won't mind, I am sure, for he has plenty of money."

Mr. Atherton looked surprised when he saw Dollie talking to a magnificent young woman, and he smiled more blandly than ever when the blushing girl introduced them.

"I am delighted to meet you, I am sure," he said, with a gallant bow to Dollie's sister.

"And I am delighted to meet you also, sir," said Marion, coldly, "for it gives me an opportunity to tell you what I think of you!"

CHAPTER IV.

MARION MEETS WITH AN ACCIDENT.

Dollie Marlowe gasped at her sister's words, and for a moment even the wily old lawyer looked a little disconcerted.

"I am sure I hope you do not think ill of me," he said, politely. "I was only taking your sister for a little outing. She is as safe with me as she would be with her own father."

"Nevertheless you have not considered the risk to her reputation," said Marion, calmly. "Dollie is your typewriter; she is in your employ. It is not proper at all for you to make a companion of her."

"But if I choose to, Miss Marlowe, surely there can be no harm. And as for the opinion of the world, what does that amount to?"

"It amounts to a great deal to a poor girl," was the quick answer. "A man may shock the proprieties all he pleases, but the woman who does so will always have to suffer. We must take the world as we find it, sir, and conform to its edicts."

"Then you think it is wrong for your sister to eat her lunch with me?" he asked, with a slight sneer. "Perhaps you imagine that her employer is not respectable?"

"I mean, sir," said the brave girl, firmly, "that I love my sister dearly, and that I will not knowingly allow her fair name to be sullied. She is engaged to be married, sir, to a noble young man. What do you suppose he would say to your remarks about the luncheon?"

"Oh, if she is tied to some whipper-

snapper, and dares not say her soul is her own——" he began, angrily, but Marion interrupted in the same calm manner.

"She is engaged to a gentleman and she means to marry him, consequently I can see no reason why she should desire your company; and as for her lunches, the salary you pay her should provide her with those necessaries."

"What do you say to all this?" asked the lawyer, suddenly, as he turned to Dollie, who was leaning weakly against the window.

"I think Marion is right," said the young girl, slowly, "but I'm sure, sir, she doesn't mean to hurt your feelings. It is her love for me that makes her so decided."

"You need not apologize for me, Dollie," said Marion, scornfully; "your employer knows that I am perfectly right, but to prove it I will ask him what he thinks his wife would say if she had interrupted this matinee plan as I did."

She was looking the lawyer steadily in the face as she spoke, and the wide gray eyes seemed to see right through him.

The man's sallow cheeks grew scarlet at her question, but, with a shrug of his shoulders, he turned toward Dollie.

"I will bid you good-day, Miss Dollie," he said, smilingly; "when you have graduated from your sister's tuition, you will find life much more pleasant." He left the room without so much as a glance at Marion, who now stood half smiling beside her sister.

"Thee did that well," said a voice near Marion. She turned and saw an old gentleman who had been sitting quietly at a little distance. He wore the garb of a Quaker.

"You heard it, sir?" asked Marion, quickly.

The old gentleman bowed, and smiled a little sadly.

"I heard and saw it all," he said, quietly. "I give thee my word I could not move away from that corner. I was so interested in the outcome that I deliberately remained to hear it."

"And you approve of my action?" asked Marion, as she studied his face closely.

"I do, indeed, daughter," said the Quaker, firmly. "Thy sister is an innocent—protect her always, particularly from such men, who are but wolves in sheep's clothing."

"That is what I thought," said Marion, as he moved away. "Come Dollie, let us go! This is no place for country maidens."

"I don't dare go back to the office," said Dollie, as they went out; "he will be as angry as possible, and perhaps he will discharge me. Oh! Marion, what was the harm? Why couldn't I go to the matinee?"

Marion drew a deep breath; she was sorely puzzled. Sometimes it seemed to her that Dollie was almost lacking in understanding.

"Dollie! Dollie!" she said, earnestly, "how can you be so foolish? As if you cared so much about a matinee that you would hurt Ralph's feelings by going with your employer! Is it not better to deny yourself a little pleasure than to take such risks with your future happiness?"

"Ralph isn't so small as to care, I am sure," said Dollie, panting; "and oh, Marion, I am so sorry you talked as you did! I think you were awfully rude to poor Mr. Atherton!"

Marion bit her lips, and her eyes filled with tears. She was realizing keenly her responsibility as a sister. She should never, never have left Dollie unprotected.

"Miss Allyn warned you," she said, almost to herself. "She is a wise woman, Dollie. If you cannot trust me, why not trust Miss Allyn? I would never have left you with her if I had not supposed you would listen to her."

"Miss Allyn is too suspicious; she is like

you," said Dollie, spitefully. "She always sees something wrong in a gentleman's attentions."

"Listen, Dollie," said Marion, almost facing her in the street. "Alma Allyn is a great deal wiser than either you or I. She has lived in a city always, and met hundreds of men; we know she is our friend—then why can we not trust her? You know that she warned you about that very thing—about lunches and theatres with your employer, Dollie!"

"Yes, and I know that she goes to lunches and theatres with gentlemen whenever she pleases," answered Dollie, triumphantly; "and I fail to see why I can't go, Marion."

There was another sigh from the anxious sister. Would Dollie never understand that she was only a ewe lamb, while Alma Allyn was a woman of wisdom and experience?

As they started across the street both girls were thinking deeply, so deeply that for once they did not use their customary caution.

There were trucks and street cars and carriages in profusion, but in a second the girls were in the very middle of the crossing.

"Look out!" yelled some one, almost in Marion's ear, and the next instant it seemed as if a dozen voices echoed it.

Marion was just ahead of Dollie, and as she looked up quickly she saw a heavy express wagon with two powerful horses bearing straight down upon her.

There was a street car just ahead, so she darted back, but the next second she saw that she had not bettered her position.

An automobile carriage was coming from the opposite direction—it would not be possible for both girls to pass it.

Dollie gave a shriek and stopped abruptly, but in that second her sister had recovered full possession of her senses.

One hasty glance at the horseless vehicle showed her that the occupant was George Colebrook. He was alone now, and his expression was one of diabolical hatred.

With one fearful effort, she grasped Dollie by the shoulders, and, running a couple of steps, gave her a push with all the force at her command, which sent her head first into the arms of a big policeman. Then Marion turned to follow, but she was a second too late. The fellow on the automobile seemed merciless in his intentions.

As the clumsy carriage came bounding onward, there was no escape.

With a stifled groan Marion went down before it.

CHAPTER V.

THE SECRET PROMISE.

When Marion Marlowe returned to consciousness she was lying on a cot in the ward of a hospital.

She was considerably dazed as yet, and looked around inquiringly.

"Dear me, what am I doing here?" she said, dreamily. "Why am I lying here, when I ought to be on duty?"

"You have met with a slight accident," said a pleasant voice very near her, as a white-capped nurse appeared. "You are in Chambers Street Hospital, not Charity, Miss Marlowe."

Marion tried to sit up, and partially succeeded. In a very few moments she remembered everything distinctly.

"Was my sister hurt?" she asked at once. "Oh, do tell me if anything happened to Dollie!"

"No, she escaped unharmed," was the prompt reply. "Your brave action saved her, my dear Miss Marlowe."

Marion leaned back on her pillow with an exclamation of gratitude. She did not care for herself, but thought only of Dollie.

"You have been here twenty-four hours now," said the nurse very quietly, "but we

consider you marvelously lucky to have escaped as you did. Fortunately, that horseless carriage struck a stone at that instant and swerved a little, which saved not only your life, but your bones, Miss Marlowe."

Marion smiled very sweetly. It did not alarm her to hear what had happened. She was not suffering at all, only she felt bruised and lame.

"The careless fellow was arrested," went on the nurse, quietly, "but he swore that he had lost control of the carriage, and as they did not hold him, of course you can have him re-arrested at any time you wish. I believe he gave them his name and address."

"Oh, no, I'll not bother!" said the sick girl, quickly. She was thinking of her friend, the woman who had loved this fellow, and for her sake she did not mean to follow up the matter. It did not occur to her then to question the nurse about the extent of her injuries, but in a few moments she began thinking about her duties.

"Did my sister wire the superintendent at Charity?" she asked, very anxiously.

"Yes, and both Dr. Hall and Miss Williams wired back their regrets. They said for you not to worry, but just get well as soon as possible. And I guess you are going to mind them," she added, with a smile, "for now that the shock to the brain has passed, I hope to send you home to your friends very shortly."

There was a little rustle of skirts and a light footstep coming down the ward.

"Is she better?" asked a cheery voice from the other side of the bed.

Marion recognized it instantly and turned her head on the pillow. The lady who stood beside her was her dear friend, Alma Allyn. Miss Allyn was a woman of twenty-five, fine-looking, stylish and far wiser than the average.

She was a newspaper reporter, with an excellent position, and had befriended the two country girls ever since they came to the city.

"We'll take you right up to Harlem to the flat now," she said, as she kissed Marion fondly, "and I'll have a nurse to take care of you until you are well, unless Dollie insists on giving up her position."

"Then she did not lose it?" said Marion, in surprise.

Miss Allyn looked grave, but she tried to speak cheerfully.

"No, she did not lose it, in spite of your plain speech, Marion. Such men as her employer do not give up their projects so easily, but this accident of yours has made her do a little thinking. I fancy her lover will have no cause to complain of her in future."

"Poor Ralph," sighed Marion, "I pity him sometimes! Dollie is such a child! Really, I am almost sorry there is an engagement."

"Don't let it worry you," said Miss Allyn, brightly, "and, now, before I go, I am going to tell you some good news. Your friend, Mr. Ray, is back in town, and you have no idea how anxious he is to see you."

The sweet face on the pillow flushed slightly at her words, and a little smile brought out two bewitching dimples.

"Oh, I am so glad!" Marion murmured, with a happy look in her eyes, and just then the nurse came over and dismissed her friend pleasantly.

As Marion lay on her cot she had ample time to think, and there were many subjects just now that were clamoring for attention. Here they were, she and Dollie, in the great city of New York, without friends or money, except what their own efforts brought to them

Still, through these very efforts she had already accomplished a little.

Her first triumph has been in saving her sister from a villain's clutches; another, the

heroic act of saving a life, had brought her sufficient money to pay off the mortgage on the old homestead in the country and so save her parents from a home at the Poor Farm. But aside from these bright spots, it had been all sorrow and suffering, but Marion had hoped it was all over when Dollie secured the position in Lawyer Atherton's office, and she, herself, was accepted as a nurse in Charity Hospital.

Miss Allyn had fitted up a cosy little flat in Harlem and taken Dollie to live with her, and Miss Allyn was so wise and so fond of the girl, Marion's heart was full of gratitude toward the noble woman.

"Oh, Dollie, my poor, weak sister!" she whispered to herself, "why is it you cannot learn to trust those who are wiser than you? Have you not had bitterness enough already in your young life, but that you must persist in wilfully inviting more sorrow?"

It was a happy moment when Mr. Ray and his sister were announced They were the first friends she had made in the city, but they had been abroad almost from the week they met, and their homecoming brought a pleasure that was most wonderfully sweet and consoling.

"Miss Marlowe! Marion!" cried Adele Ray, as she clasped Marion in her arms. "How glad I am to see you again, but how unutterably unpleasant to find you in a hospital!"

"As brave as ever, I hear," were Archie Ray's first words, as he extended both hands and grasped the girl's slim fingers.

Marion gazed from one to the other in eager delight

"Oh, I am so happy!" she murmured over and over, "and I am going home to-morrow, so you will not have to see me here again, Adele. I know it must have been a shock to you to see me in a hospital."

The two girls chatted together, while Archie Ray looked on He was a tall, handsome young man, with dark, pleading eyes, and possessed a charmingly aristocratic manner.

He had been deeply in love with Marion before he went abroad, and now, when he saw her again, all the old tenderness came back to him, and he longed almost uncontrollably to press her to his bosom.

But if Marion read his thoughts, she did not show it by so much as a glance. There was an open cordiality in her manner that baffled him completely.

Suddenly Adele Ray's face grew clouded in the midst of their talking. It was evident to Marion that she was thinking of something unpleasant.

"Oh, Marion, dear, I want you to help us," she said, slowly. "We have a terrible secret for your ears, but it has to be told, and the sooner the better. We want you to do us a favor, my brother and I, and, oh, Marion, dear, do give us your sympathy!"

She looked so distressed that Marion's cheeks grew pale, but she took Miss Ray's hand and held it tightly.

Archie Ray bit his lips and his face clouded a little. He had been momentarily dreading this particular moment, for he knew what was coming and would almost have given his life to have prevented it.

"I will help you gladly," Marion whispered quickly. "There is nothing you would ask that I would not willingly promise."

The fair girl little realized the blow which she was about to receive, else she could hardly have smiled as bravely as she did at that minute.

Adele Ray leaned over and whispered something in her ear, and as Marion listened her cheeks grew as pale as death itself.

"Is it possible?" she murmured, in a far-away voice, and then her wavering eyes met the glance of Adele Ray's brother.

The sadness in those dark eyes went straight to Marion's heart. In an instant her own grief was put aside and she was willing to bear anything for this fond, noble brother.

As she answered Adele's appeal, she still looked at her brother and the words, "I will do it," were said to him. To him she had given her sacred, secret promise.

CHAPTER VI.

MARION'S STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE.

It was Reginald Brookes who sent a carriage for Marion on the day that she was allowed to leave the Chambers St. Hospital to return for a few days to the little flat in Harlem.

Through some mysterious medium he had heard of Mr. Ray and was determined if possible to outdo his rival in kind attentions to Marion.

"I'll never stoop to anything but a fair fight," he said to his mother, "and as this Mr. Ray is a gentleman, I have no doubt but that he is honorable. She must choose between us; when she does I shall be satisfied."

"You are as noble as you are sensible, my son," was his mother's fond answer, "and Miss Mariowe is not the girl, I am sure, to be fickle in her decision."

When Dr. Brookes reached the little flat to welcome Marion back from the hospital, he found Dollie and Miss Allyn much worried.

"Marion should have been here at five o'clock," said Dollie, half crying. "Miss Allyn telephoned and learned that she left the hospital at four, and now just look, it is nearly seven!"

"Something must have happened!" said Miss Allyn, soberly, "but how shall we find out, that is the question, doctor?"

Dr. Brookes paced the floor in the greatest consternation. He looked at his watch repeatedly, and seemed to be figuring something.

Suddenly a sharp ring of the bell made their hearts beat wildly. Dollie rushed out in the hall and came face to face with Bert Jackson.

"You are all scared to death about Marion, aren't you?" he began, abruptly; "well, you needn't worry, she'll probably be here in a minute! There was a drunken woman fighting in the street down town and of course Marion had to stop and take a hand in the scrimmage. Oh! I don't mean that she did any of the scrapping!" he explained as he saw their astonished faces, "but she just put a stop to the row and then hauled that woman into her cab and took her to her home, and that's what has detained her!"

"It's just like Marion!" cried Dollie, laughing.

"It was dreadful risky," said Miss Allyn, shaking her head.

"It is awful!" cried Dr. Brookes, almost frantic as he thought of it. "Why, the girl will be robbed or killed if she doesn't stop doing for such common people!"

"You ought to have seen her," said Bert, who was bristling with admiration. "There was a big crowd all around the woman, who was dancing and yelling, and just as the carriage drove by a policeman charged into the crowd and was going to grab the woman when she jabbed a hat pin into him. Wow! but you ought to have heard him howl! The mob gave him the laugh and that made him madder, and in a jiffy he yanked his club out of his belt and made a lunge at her—and he'd have knocked her silly if it hadn't been for Marion!"

"What did she do?" asked Dollie, breathlessly.

"Do! Why, she just threw open the carriage door and stood on the step; then her

voice rang out like a silver bugle as she cried: "Don't you dare to strike that woman, officer! Shame on you, you brute! I will report your conduct!"

"And then what happened?" asked Miss Allyn, excitedly.

"Then the 'cop' fell back and looked ashamed of himself, and Marion jumped down from the carriage and started for the woman and the crowd made way for her as though she was an empress—and she didn't look unlike one, either, you bet, for her head was up in the air and her eyes just shot sparks at them! Oh, Marion just knocked them speechless! I tell you she is a dandy!"

"Go on with your story!" said Dr. Brookes, still anxiously. "I want to know exactly what happened after that."

"Why, Marion got hold of the woman and coaxed her to the carriage and when the woman told her where she lived she ordered the driver to go there and my! how the crowd yelled when they drove off together."

"Then there is no knowing where she is now?" said Dr. Brookes, hastily. "The brave girl may have been imposed upon by the drunken woman! Have you any idea what address she gave her?"

Bert Jackson looked crestfallen for about a minute, then a ray of joy illumined his features.

"I wasn't near enough to hear the address," he said, quickly. "You see, I was riding by with my adopted father, and it was only by a good bit of coaxing that I made him let me off, but a man in the crowd told me that the woman was May Osgood, and that she was an actress from some theatre or other."

"Great Heavens! Greenaway's sweetheart!" cried Reginald Brookes, "and drunk on the street!"

As the others were staring at him, he hastened to explain, and before he had finished another peal of the bell startled them.

"This is surely Marion!" cried Dollie, darting down the stairs.

But once more she was doomed to bitter disappointment, for half way down the first flight she met Mr. Ray and his sister, both pale as ghosts, and Adele almost crying.

"Oh, what is it?" gasped Dollie, who thought only of her sister. "Has anything happened? Have you heard from Marion?"

Not even Miss Allyn thought to introduce the two gentlemen, but without a moment's hesitation Mr. Ray stepped straight up to the doctor.

"You and Bert must come with me right away!" he said, quickly. "Miss Marlowe has been inveigled into an awful trap, and it depends on us to get her out of it!"

"I'm ready!" cried Bert, clenching his fists and setting his teeth.

"Lead the way!" said Dr. Brookes, snatching up his hat immediately.

"Have you a revolver?" was Mr. Ray's astonishing question.

Miss Allyn rushed to her trunk and brought out a small weapon.

"I keep it for burglars; it's better than nothing," she said, briefly; "but how about the police? Can't they aid you in this matter?"

"They would only bungle it," was Mr. Ray's evasive reply. "Marion has been lured into the apartments of a wicked woman and while I do not fear that she will meet with bodily harm——"

Miss Allyn interrupted him before he could finish.

"Go, at once!" she said, quickly, "we will be calm and wait for you."

As the three young men tramped noisily down the stairs, poor, frightened Dollie went promptly into hysterics.

"Hush! Don't cry, Dollie!" said Miss

Allyn, sternly. "If those three young men who love Marion cannot save her, I shall be greatly mistaken; besides, if you cry so you will not be able to hear what Miss Ray tells me, and I am sure you wish to know what has happened to your sister!"

Dollie stifled her sobs, and wiped her eyes.

In a few moments she was quiet and ready to listen.

"I'll tell you all I know as quickly as possible," Adele Ray said, brokenly; "and Oh, girls, I want your sympathy for my poor, dear brother!"

CHAPTER VII.

A BROTHER'S STORY.

Adele Ray was as pale as death when she spoke again, but her hands were clenched in a resolute manner.

She was a woman of twenty-five, whose life had been a sad one, and her handsome face was marred by lines of grief and bitterness.

In a low, vibrating voice she told her story, making it as brief as possible so as not to distress them.

"My dear brother has had a bitter experience," she said, "for, like many a thoughtless youth he became enamored with a young girl while he was a boy at college, and without any of us knowing it he made her his wife. She was a vain, silly creature, who looked like a big wax doll, and in less than a year Archie discovered that she was faithless. He left her at once, but made her a generous allowance—he had money of his own, and no one asked him to account for it. One more year passed and he heard that the girl was dead—he took pains to prove it and considered the reports verified. Meanwhile not one of his family knew it. When he came home from college he was only twenty, and to think, my brother thought himself a widower."

There were tears running down her face as she paused for a moment. Dollie had forgotten to weep, she was so interested in the story.

"It was in London, six weeks ago, that the awful revelations occurred," she went on after a minute. "Archie and I were walking together on the Strand one day when all of a sudden he gripped my arm and the next moment he dropped—he had fainted like a woman. I had only time to see that a young 'bleached blonde' was passing us; after that, for an hour, I was busy with my brother. Well, to make this story short, Archie told me everything. He had to, you see, for the blonde woman was his wife—he recognized her instantly—she was living!"

"How horrible!" cried Miss Allyn, as Miss Ray stopped speaking. She had thought just then of what Dr. Brookes had said and was beginning to put "two and two" together.

"Oh, and I thought he loved Marion!" burst out Dollie impetuously. "I was as sure as anything that she would marry him some time."

"That is the hardest part of it! He does love her," sighed Miss Ray, "but I was obliged to tell her his miserable secret, and it is that which has brought her into this awful trouble."

Miss Allyn said nothing, but Dollie cried out in astonishment.

"She has a picture of Archie's wife that I gave her," explained Miss Ray, "and she promised to watch for and to try and save her. You see, Mary, Archie's wife has gone to the bad altogether, and of course we feel pretty sure that she will drift to Blackwell's Island, and in case that happens we thought Marion would see her, and oh, to think that the woman should have tricked us. For it

was she, my brother's shameless wife, that Marion tried to rescue to-day, and now to think that the dear girl is in her power and she knows, that drunken creature, that Archie is in love with her."

This time even Miss Allyn gave her a questioning glance, then suddenly Miss Ray blushed scarlet as she turned her face from her companions.

"Forgive me, please, for wounding you," she said, very softly, "but, Mary, that dreadful woman is in the constant companionship of a man who has met Marion here, as your friend, Miss Allyn. He goes by the name of George Harris Colebrooke."

With a little groan Miss Allyn rose from her chair.

"The black-hearted scoundrel!" she muttered, savagely. "And he hates her, Miss Ray; because she was loyal to me George Colebrooke hates her."

Dollie burst out crying again and it took both women to comfort her. She was now thoroughly alarmed about the condition of her sister.

She had entirely forgotten the doctor's allusion to "May Osgood," but Miss Allyn was pondering it over and over in silence.

It was almost midnight when the three young men returned, but they came triumphant, bringing Marion with them.

"Put her right to bed," said Dr. Brookes, authoritatively. "The poor girl is worn out from this evening's experience. If the shock is not too great she will be all right to-morrow."

"I am all right now," cried Marion, decidedly, as she insisted upon walking to a chair unsupported. "Oh, what a dreadful experience it has been. To think that I was only trying to do the woman a kindness and she deliberately connived to get me in to her rooms in order that I might be insulted by—by that villain!"

"We all know who you mean!" said Miss Allyn, promptly. "George Colebrooke hates you, and the woman is his friend! Oh, how could I ever have been so deceived—so foolish as to trust him."

"Thank Heaven you are done with him!" said Marion gladly, then she glanced at her rescuers with a pitiful look, but she could not yet understand Mr. Ray and the doctor being together.

She was very pale and almost radiantly beautiful as she said good-night to her friends a little later. If there was any preference in her heart for either of these noble young men, there was not an expression or glance to show it.

As Dr. Brookes said good-night and walked away by himself he had fully decided that Bert's information was erroneous—if that woman was Mrs. Ray, how could she be "May Osgood?"

"Marion, I believe you are a coquette," said Miss Allyn, when the girls were alone. "I don't see how else you could possibly be so entirely neutral."

"I act as I feel," said Marion, simply, "I don't know which I like best and to-night I am too tired to think—they were both as brave as lions and Bert held his own with them nobly."

After the three girls were in bed Marion told them what had happened. She had only to speak distinctly, for Miss Allyn's bed-room was adjoining.

"I knew her by her picture, and, of course, I remembered my promise," she began, "and I am sure she must have known me by some means or other, for she began eyeing me very curiously as soon as she was in the carriage. When we got to her house she pleaded helplessness," she continued, "so I assisted her up the stairs in spite of my weak condition. Then the moment we were in her flat she burst out laughing. In a second she

had locked the door and I was a prisoner. Of course I demanded to be let out, but she said she was Archie Ray's wife and that I was his sweetheart and that she would smirch my reputation so that he would never again care for me. At that very minute who should come from another room but George Colebrooke and another man, both fairly reeking with liquor.

"I was horribly frightened, but I did not show it. I demanded to be let out. They only laughed at me. Then one of them put his arms around me and held me tightly while the woman mixed something in a glass and Colebrooke tried to make me swallow it."

"Oh, Marion, what did you do?" gasped Dollie, breathlessly.

Marion smiled a little, now that the frightful thing was over.

"Why, I bit his hand so badly that he dropped the glass," was her answer, "and just at that second the door was burst in and the next thing I knew my friends were all there and that fellow Colebrook had vanished like magic."

CHAPTER VIII.

A VISIT TO THE MORGUE.

Two days later Marion was on her way back to Charity Hospital. She had been absent from duty for a week, but they had all heard of her injury and been most kind and sympathetic. This time, as she passed down Twenty-sixth street, Archie Ray was with her. He had been first in the offer of escort on this occasion.

As they rode slowly along in Mr. Ray's private carriage, Marion could see that his face had grown wonderfully sad. It was not like the face that she had recalled so vividly that night when Dr. Brookes had told her that he loved her.

"You are grieving terribly, Mr. Ray," she said to him, sweetly. "Do, please, try to look on the bright side a little. There is surely some way of ridding yourself of that woman."

"Do you believe in divorce?" asked Mr. Ray, suddenly.

"I most certainly do," was Marion's prompt answer. "I believe in anything that will undo an error."

"You are more just and merciful than the world at large," sighed the young man. "Most people would say, 'If you married her, stick to her,' and I would say so, too, if the difference was not quite so glaring."

Marion's gray eyes grew tender as she glanced at him shyly. It seemed almost immodest to her that she should be advising him in this matter.

"'For better or worse' does not mean that," she said, very slowly. "When sin and crime come between husband and wife, it is time to separate to avoid contamination. No true man or woman will hold the promise, 'until death,' as indissoluble under such conditions. It is contrary to all the laws of human nature."

Mr. Ray listened eagerly. These were his own thoughts put in words. He was glad, indeed, that she coincided so completely.

"I promised loyally and honestly," he murmured, after a minute, "but I did not dream that I was marrying a dual character. I wrecked my whole life by one error. Oh, can I ever undo it?"

"I certainly should try," said Marion, stoutly. "You are too young and too—too noble to be tied to such a woman."

The carriage halted as Marion spoke, and Mr. Ray glanced out of the window to see what was the matter.

"We are right in front of the Morgue," said Marion, looking out. "Oh, I see what is stopping us; they are loading up the dead wagon."

Her companion shivered as he saw a wagon load of pine coffins about ten feet ahead of them.

"What a horrible place!" he said. "Have you ever been in there?"

"No, but I'd like to go if there is time," said Marion, quickly. "And I am quite sure there is. The boat does not leave until eleven."

Mr. Ray spoke to the driver and then helped Marion out. At the same moment another carriage rolled up and stopped directly before the entrance.

"It is Mr. Atherton, Dollie's employer!" Marion whispered, as she drew back suddenly.

A man had stepped from the other carriage and gone into the Morgue. She knew him instantly, although his back was toward her.

Archie Ray hardly heard the young girl's next words. He was staring after the lawyer with a dazed expression.

"He is the old lawyer who is Dollie's employer," Marion said again, "and he's a regular *roué*, if I am any judge. Why, do you know, he took Dollie to luncheon one day and would have taken her to a matinee if I had not stopped it."

"Is it possible?" said Mr. Ray, coming back to her words, with a start. "Why, that man is my father-in-law. He is the father of my wife. Has not his own daughter's career made him more merciful of other maidens?"

Marion was shocked at his news, but there was no time to reply. The next moment they were in the dingy home of the dead, gazing around them with curiosity.

"He did not see us," whispered Marion, as the lawyer went out again. "And I am very glad, for I should not care to speak to him."

"Dead John," the keeper, came in at that moment. He was a little impatient as he looked at his visitors.

"Be yees lookin' fer any one in perteckeler?" he asked, crossly, "fer if yees ain't, it ain't no time ter be comin' in wen I'm busy."

"What was he looking for?" asked Mr. Ray, pointing after the lawyer. "You were civil enough to him, even if you were busy."

The man shook his head and became suddenly better natured.

"He's lookin' fer his gal, he sez." was his answer. "He ain't seen her fer years an' he comes here lookin' every mornin'."

"That's a queer combination," said Mr. Ray, as he put Marion back into the carriage. "A man who is always hunting the Morgue on the lookout for his own wayward one, yet never losing a chance to wrong some other man's daughter."

"I think a little more knowledge of the evil in the world will drive me mad," said Marion, sharply. "Oh, is there no end to it? I am beginning to be doubtful."

Mr. Ray looked at her fair face with one of his old, tender glances.

"It is wrong that you should have learned even so much as one lesson of the evil," he said, softly. "You should have been kept free from it all, my peerless Marion."

The beautiful girl's face flushed scarlet to the roots of her hair, but Mr. Ray touched her hand gently, almost in a pleading manner.

"Let me think of you thus—it can do no harm," he said, softly. "Let me say to myself, she is my peerless Marion, even though a barrier exists between us which prevents my saying anything more."

Marion bowed her head and the tears sprang to her eyes.

"You are too good to think so well of me," she said, simply. "Oh, I wish you could know how deeply I sympathize with you. How sorry I am to know how you have suffered."

She let her hand rest in his as she looked at him.

"And you will watch, Marion, for my erring wife," he said, sadly; "you will forget what she has done in your friendship for me, for I should never forgive myself if she should be in want or die uncared for."

"I will watch," said Marion, simply, and then the carriage stopped. Once more Marion was admitted to the little hospital dock, going back to her duties among the city's unfortunate. As she reached the deck of the *Thomas Brennan,* some one stepped out of the pilot house to greet her.

It was young Dr. Brookes, on his way to the Prison Hospital.

CHAPTER IX.

MARION WITNESSES A QUEER SIGHT.

"Big Belle, the Confidence Queen," was a very versatile woman. At liberty, she was noted for the variety of her accomplishments, and in prison walls she was equally useful both in her cell and in the workroom.

But this strange woman's greatest delight was in the care of the sick, and as she passed from cot to cot in the prison hospital both her hand and her voice were as gentle as a mother's.

She was a large, fine-looking woman, with brilliant black eyes, but the coarse prison garb did not enhance the beauty of either face or figure.

Belle had "done time" at the "Isle de Blackwell" before, so she felt very much at home in her present occupation.

There was not a rule or regulation about the prison that she did not know, and if she ever longed to break one of them there was no indication of it in her manner.

Rather, it seemed to her associates that Belle was merely "biding her time," and, according to all accounts, a goodly portion of her ill-gotten gains was steadily drawing interest in various banks in anticipation of her coming.

As Big Belle bent over one of her charges whose face was covered with bandages, she moistened them as skillfully as any trained nurse could have done, and as the prison physician entered the ward she went over to him promptly, standing with calmly folded hands and eyes cast down, the very embodiment of meekness and servitude.

"How is she this morning?" was the doctor's first question, asked without even raising his eyes from the prescription he was writing.

"Worse, Dr. Brookes," said "Big Belle" in a lady-like voice. "I should say that the vitriol was still burning deeper, and if I am not much mistaken there is a considerable fever."

"I'll have to get you a thermometer," said Dr. Brookes, without thinking; "you can certainly take temperature, Belle, they tell me you are clever."

A half-suppressed laugh from the woman startled him. He looked up and caught her eye, and then he, too, smiled slightly.

"I keep forgetting that you people aren't to be trusted," he said, pleasantly. "When will I ever learn that I am working in a prison!"

The woman did not answer, but she followed him with her eyes as he moved away. She was by far too clever not to understand his words, and by far too unhappy not to be secretly pleased by them.

"He'd trust me all right, if he dared," she thought. "As if there was any danger of my killing myself, or any one else for that matter!"

"May I come in a minute?" asked a pleasant voice at the door.

Dr. Brookes looked around quickly, and a smile spread over his features. His visitor was Marion Marlowe, in her nurse's dress

and bare-headed, except for the light shawl, which she was just slipping to her shoulders.

"Come right in," said the young man, as he went quickly forward, then stopped suddenly at the thought of his professional dignity.

"Oh, Miss Marlowe, what ward do you come from, please? I am almost afraid to make you welcome."

"Don't fear," said Marion, smilingly, as she stepped into the ward. "Since I came back from the city, I have only been helping in the linen room. They have been kind enough to keep me off the wards until I grew a little stronger."

"Big Belle" was just passing on her way to the vitriol patient and Marion watched her movements with a look of wonder.

"The cleverest 'confidence woman' in the world," whispered the doctor. "She counts the victims she has fleeced by the score, yet see how gentle she is with my patients."

"What is the matter with her?" asked Marion, nodding toward the patient with the bandaged face.

"Why, she was in some drunken fight with another woman. I believe it was over some man, and as they left Jefferson Market Court her rival fairly deluged her with vitriol. She only came up from the city yesterday—sent up as a 'drunk and disorderly' for ten days only, but she'll never go back. She is slowly dying."

"Poor thing!" sighed Marion, with tears in her eyes. "But her fate is the same as dozens that I have seen already. Oh, this awful island! This awful island!"

She was moving toward the patient when Dr. Brookes stopped her.

"No, Marion!" he said, firmly; "you must not go any nearer. Erysipelas has set in and you know you are still in a weak condition. If you should catch any infection in my wards, I would never forgive myself—so forgive me, please, for being inhospitable!"

"Big Belle" came back and stood quietly beside the doctor. She had something to say to him and was awaiting his permission to speak.

"She wishes me to send for her father," she reported as Dr. Brookes turned to her. "She knows that she is dying, and is anxious to see him."

"Get his name," was the doctor's answer, but "Big Belle" smiled sadly. "I tried to," she said, quickly, "but she lapsed into unconsciousness that minute."

"They may know his name in the office," said the doctor. "I'll go right down now and see if I can wire him."

As Dr. Brookes and Marion reached the door of the building, a breath of salt, fresh air came over the water.

"What a mockery!" said Marion, with a heart-felt sigh. "Oh! this place is so beautiful with its wonderful, changing scenery, yet how sad are the hearts that dwell in these buildings. How weary are the eyes that gaze out on these waters!"

The tramp of many feet came as an echo to her words. Marion turned, and through the iron grating saw the convicts marching to their luncheon.

"Oh! do let me go in and see them!" she cried, impulsively. "It is the first time I have been in here, although I have been a month on the Island."

Dr. Brookes spoke to the turnkey who at once opened the great guard doors.

As Marion stepped into the dim corridor, with its small high windows and bleak gray walls, she shuddered involuntarily as all do at their first visit to a prison.

Tier after tier of cells rose above her head and now that the convicts were on their way to the dining-room she stood still for a moment and gazed morbidly into the blackness.

Suddenly there was a cry from the doctor and a guard came running toward him.

Dr. Brookes pointed with one hand toward a closed cell just above them, and with the other tried desperately to push Marion behind him.

But he was a second too late, for Marion's glance had followed his own, and for the next few minutes both stood speechless with horror.

A man whose face was so familiar to Marion that her heart almost stopped beating when she recognized it, was hanging by the neck to the door of his cell. In the momentary excitement of the meal hour he had seized his opportunity, and when the guard at last cut him loose he was too far gone to be resuscitated.

"Who is he?" asked Dr. Brookes, as they brought him down.

Almost automatically the guard muttered the dead man's number, but with ashen lips Marion gave the information.

"His name is Lawson," she said, in a whisper; "and he is the villain who boarded at my father's home one summer. He was a hypnotist by profession, and he abducted my sister Dollie! He was sentenced to Sing Sing, so I had no idea that I would see him here."

The guard explained that he had been transferred to the Island by special order, only a few days previously.

Reginald Brookes bit his lips in a burst of anger.

"Forgive me," he said, humbly; "I had no idea you bore such sorrow. Thank Heaven he has paid the penalty and yes—I am glad that you saw it."

"I am, too," said Marion, who was deathly pale. "If it had to be—I am glad that I saw it."

CHAPTER X.

A CONVICT'S CONFIDENCE.

That very afternoon Dr. Brookes got a letter from Dr. Greenway. It was the first time he had heard from him since he loaned him the five thousand dollars.

"Poor chap! He little knows what a shock I had," he thought, "when for a moment I thought I had discovered his sweetheart in that drunken woman!"

He tore open the letter and read it hastily. It was very brief and only took a minute.

"I am nicely settled," wrote Greenaway, "and would be perfectly happy, but my sweetheart has thrown me over—jilted me—to be honest. Of course you will think that if I can talk of it I do not suffer, but at just this minute I must talk or die, and you, doc, are my friend, the only one I have in creation. Yes, May has left me and gone, I don't know where, but to be honest again, I think it is to the devil! She was always gay, but I trusted her, doc, even while she was abroad for three months. I did not doubt her, but now there is no use denying it any longer, she is a bad, dissolute woman—and yet I love her!"

There was a little more to the doctor's strange letter, but it was the postscript that Dr. Brookes remembered longest and wondered most over.

"I haven't forgotten the name of your little nurse-friend, yet, doc," it said, "for I have a curious presentiment, in some way, that some sorrow will come to me through Miss Marion Marlowe!"

"As queer as ever—queerer, perhaps," muttered Dr. Brookes as he finished the letter.

Then as he went about his work in the meagerly furnished wards he found himself wondering if Greenaway was going crazy.

"What a fool to throw himself away on a woman like that!" he said aloud. The next instant he noticed with embarrassment that "Big Belle" had heard him.

"By Jove!" thought the doctor, suddenly, "I am going to talk to this woman. Prison rules be hanged! She is a human being, and if any one knows the world this woman knows it."

He turned toward her instantly—there was no one within hearing.

"Belle," he said, quietly, "tell me something of your life. I want to know your motive for being dishonest."

The woman stared at him a moment, and then smiled broadly. There was a vestige of her old shrewdness in the way she answered him.

"I have never been proven dishonest," she said, quietly. "I came up this time on the strength of my reputation, but, granted that I am dishonest, this is my only motive. I wish to hold my own in the struggle of life—I am what you might call a rabid believer in the 'survival of the fittest.'"

"But how long do you expect to survive?" he asked quickly, "and do you call your present existence living?"

"I have some money," said the woman quietly, "and this fortune is put away where no law can touch it. I have fifteen years yet before I shall be fifty-five; more of those years I expect to spend in prison, but after that——"

She stopped a moment and chuckled before she added:

"After that I presume I shall enter society."

To save himself, the doctor could not help laughing. He was amused, to say the least, at this woman's philosophy.

"You seem to have no fear of results," he said after a minute. "What was your early training? Were your parents religious?"

For once "Big Belle's" eyes snapped with a hidden fire. He had touched the chord that was most responsive.

"I was a country girl like that nurse who was in this morning," she said, quickly; "I came to the city because my parents could not support me. I was only one of the thousands who are kicked out at an early age to battle with the world's evils, and oh, how I was tossed and buffeted about! How readily my superiors made a football of me! How willingly women inveigled me into foolish ways, and how quickly and thoroughly they abused me for being inveigled! I was a fresh field daisy, innocent as a lamb, but oh, how gladly men sullied the whiteness of my soul, how eagerly they flattered me and led me astray, and then, when I was as they were, how brutally they served me! There were times when I thought I would gladly die, Dr. Brookes, but there was something in me that kept urging and urging, and at last I turned, as a worm will turn, and yes, I will tell you, my motive was to get even!"

The black eyes were scintilating with fury now, and Dr. Brookes almost regretted that he had stirred up such a passion.

"I don't entirely blame you," he said quietly, "and yet I know that you are wrong. It is better to suffer than to persecute—apart from all religious sentiment, I believe that thoroughly!"

"Well, I don't!" said the woman in a cold, hard voice. "I prefer to take things as they come, Dr. Brookes, and you cannot say that I do not take my punishment philosophically."

They were at one end of a long ward when this conversation took place; five minutes later they were both bending over a patient.

"You can take the bandages off now, Belle," said the doctor, softly. "Poor soul, she is dying and perhaps she will be more comfortable."

"Did you learn her name?" asked the female convict.

"No, she came as Mary Jones, which means absolutely nothing. We have wired to the police for further information."

"Well, it will come too late, I'm afraid," said the woman softly. The patient had breathed her last before she had fairly removed the dressings.

Marion Marlowe was standing by a window in Charity Hospital, watching the setting sun just as the "vitriol patient's" remains were taken to the criminal "dead-house."

Little did she dream what tragedy had been enacted, or how closely connected was her life with this poor creature's.

She was thinking of Mr. Ray and his great grief as she stood there, and it was only the stroke of the bell that roused her from her reverie.

As she passed through the corridor on her way to the dining-room an office assistant came along with a handful of letters.

"Oh, have you one for me?" asked Marion, quickly. "I am Marion Marlowe, I'm in the linen-room at present."

"You were at the 'medical,'" said the young man as he handed her a letter. "There ain't much danger of any of us losing track of you, Miss Marlowe."

Marion looked at him quickly, and an admiring glance rewarded her.

"Prettiest girl in the building," he said,

blandly. "Every man on the Island is in love with you, Miss Peaches."

"Convicts and all?" asked Marion, laughing.

"If they ain't, then they are in the right place," was the answer; "but I guess if they wasn't they wouldn't all of 'em be breaking rules to look at you! Don't you remember that fellow that got shot, Miss Marlowe?"

Marion shuddered as she recalled the terrible scene, and as she walked slowly away her face paled a little.

It had happened during the first week of her stay on the Island, and ever since then she had been trying hard to forget it. Then a vision of the black-souled Lawson's tragic end flitted across her brain and she put up both hands as if to ward off such pictures.

"That poor convict that jumped into the water and was shot is to be envied," she whispered sadly. "He went down out of sight beneath the smiling waters, but Lawson, the abductor, goes to Potter's Field. It is right! It is just! He richly deserves it!"

CHAPTER XI.

BERT JACKSON TO THE RESCUE.

The tragedy of the "vitriol patient's" death was almost a tragedy of two cities—the great city of New York, where crime is conceived and fostered and the smaller city on Blackwell's Island, where crime is punished and ended.

A few hours after that sad death in the Prison Hospital, the lawyer, Augustus Atherton, stood on the steps of his office waiting for his typewriter, Dollie Marlowe, to join him.

As he stood there waiting he twisted his gray mustache idly. His hands were neatly gloved and his attire stylish and spotless.

"Not a bad looking chap for fifty," said a man who was passing, "and do you know, Dare, he is a great masher—a regular sport with the ladies."

"I have heard that his wife left him years ago," was the low answer, "and that his daughter, the one that married young Ray while he was in college, was quick in striking the old man's pace and kept it up until she went plumb to the devil."

"Where is she now?" asked the first speaker, glancing back to see if the lawyer was still waiting.

"The last I heard she was seen fighting on the street. I believe her husband or some friend of his happened to see her, and for the sake of the family kept the thing quiet."

As the two men passed on, Dollie Marlowe came tripping down the steps. She was dressed in a natty blue cloth suit and looked more bewitching than ever.

"You are sure I will get home early?" she said to the lawyer, plaintively.

"Certainly, little one," was the smiling answer as he helped her into a carriage.

"Marion Marlowe would be furious if she knew I was going out with you after all," she said after they had started, "and, of course, my chaperon, Miss Allyn, will think she has to tell her. Oh, I must manage to get home early so they will not know anything about it."

"Any one would think I was an ogre or a monster of some sort," said the lawyer, smiling down at her, "when really all I am doing is just giving you a little pleasure. Certainly there is no harm in a supper in a private room together."

"Can't we go to a regular restaurant?" asked Dollie, shyly. "I think I would prefer it very much, if you please, Mr. Atherton."

The wily old lawyer leaned over and smiled at her before he answered. As he gazed into her eyes, he took her hand and pressed it gently.

"My dear child, you are as safe with me as you would be with your own father," he said, purringly. "Do, Dollie, raise those sweet eyes and tell me that you trust me."

"Oh, I do trust you, of course," said the girl, a little more bravely, "but I keep thinking of Ralph, and it makes me nervous."

"Ralph is the young man whom you are engaged to, is he not?" he asked, suavely. "Well, can Ralph give you nice dinners and take you to theatres, and can he buy you pretty dresses and jewelry, Dollie?"

"No, he can't—not now," said Dolly, a little sadly. "Ralph is only a book-keeper on fifteen dollars a week. We mean to be married as soon as he gets twenty."

"And I can give you twenty dollars a week

for your own self," said the lawyer, quickly, "and I will do it, too, Dollie, if you will give up this fellow."

"Oh, I couldn't give Ralph up. Why, I love him!" cried the girl, sharply. "And I don't know why it is that I have come out with you, Mr. Atherton. I know Ralph would not like it. Oh, I am sure it is wicked!"

Poor, weak, little Dollie was growing hysterical now, and the next moment she found her head resting on her employer's shoulder.

As the lawyer leaned over to pull down the carriage blind he became suddenly aware that some one was looking in at the window.

"The impudence of that fellow," he muttered between his teeth. "It is a chap on horseback, and he was trying to peep," he explained to Dollie. The next instant he bent boldly and pressed a kiss on her forehead.

"Oh, Mr. Atherton, you mustn't," cried Dollie in genuine alarm, but as she tried to draw herself away from him he only held her tighter.

"Let go of me this minute," she gasped, stamping her foot in anger. Her cheeks were like roses now and her eyes like purple pansies. As her lips trembled with anger they seemed more tempting than ever, and Augustus Atherton, unable to resist her beauty, made another attempt to draw her head to his bosom.

With the frenzy of despair Dollie tore herself away and as quick as a flash uncovered the tiny window.

One glance through the pane made her almost shout for joy, for there, still riding his mount as close to the carriage as possible, was Bert Jackson, in all the glory of his lately acquired finery.

"Oh, Bert, save me!" shrieked Dollie, and that second the horses were stopped.

Bert Jackson sprang to the ground and threw the carriage door open.

"Come out here, you old sinner, and let me lick you!" he roared as he almost lifted Dollie to the roadway beside him.

"Go on, driver!" yelled the lawyer, shrinking back in his seat.

"Not by a darn sight!" bawled Bert, making a dive into the carriage.

"Quick, Bert! Let him go," cried Dollie in dismay. "Oh, stop quick! There's a lot of people staring at us already."

Bert dropped back to the street with a groan of rage. As the carriage rolled away he shook his fist at it vigorously.

"I'll take this car, Bert, and go right home," said Dollie, penitently, as Bert was looking about wondering what to do with her.

"All right, if you will," said Bert, very coolly, "my horse won't lead very well in the street. I'll be up this evening to see you, Dollie."

"Oh, Bert, I am so ashamed," said Dollie as he signaled a car. "You won't tell Marion or Ralph or Miss Allyn, will you?"

"Not a word," said Bert with a little grin. "But I'll punch that old duffer yet—you see if I don't! The idea of his making love to my future sister!"

CHAPTER XII.

MARION SAVES A VICTIM FROM POTTER'S FIELD.

Dr. Reginald Brookes had given his last order for the night, and as he left the Prison Hospital he bent his steps almost involuntarily toward the warden's office. Some way or other the vitriol patient's case had interested him greatly, and he was anxious to know if any word had been received from the New York police about her. A large envelope was handed to him in the office, and almost identical with his breaking the seal he asked the warden a question.

"Any further information about Mary Jones, Mr. Warner?"

The warden turned to his desk and began looking over his letters, and just then Dr. Brookes gave a stifled cry of astonishment. He had drawn a neatly folded paper from the envelope in his hand, and in an instant he saw that it was his friend Greenaway's life insurance policy.

"What has happened?" He asked the question mentally, and just then the warden turned to him.

"Known for a time as May Osgood," he said briefly. "Was an actress, but had no particular reputation."

Dr. Brookes dropped the envelope and stared a minute.

"My God!" he said, sharply. "Can that be

possible! Why, one of my dearest chums is in love with that woman!"

"Well, she couldn't have been much," said the warden, bluntly. "A 'drunk and disorderly' and not a friend to bury her!"

"I'll bury her myself if this turns out to be true! I'll wire Greenaway to-night," said the doctor, promptly.

"Can't identify her now, her face is a sight," said the warden again. "That acid ate clear through to the bone; she must have been deluged with it."

"Nevertheless, I shall send for him," said the physician slowly, and in a very few minutes he had sent the message.

After he had left the building the warden received a communication. It was from the Chief of Police, giving some further information about the woman.

"Hem! Looks as if she did have friends after all," he growled crossly, then he, too, wrote a message and had it wired to the city.

At ten o'clock the next morning two more deaths had been reported, and as sometimes happen, a blunder resulted.

At eleven o'clock there were two pine coffins lying out on the very edge of the upper dock, both bearing tags and stenciled numbers.

At that hour Marion Marlowe was standing with the Superintendent of Nurses, listening to some instructions of a private nature.

"I would go myself if I had time," the superintendent was saying, "for I would like to see Dr. Miller and tell him about it, but you can be spared and I can't, Miss Marlowe, and I'll consider it a favor if you will do my errand."

"I am only too glad to be of service to you, madam," was Marion's answer, "and I shall enjoy the sail up the river, too, as I have never been farther than Blackwell's Island."

"Well, Dr. Miller is at the Homeopathic Hospital on Ward's Island," was the reply, "and you have only to tell him exactly what I have told you."

Marion Marlowe turned away with a respectful bow, then something occurred to her and she looked back anxiously.

"Oh, by the way, will there be a boat this morning, madam?"

The superintendent thought a moment—she had almost forgotten that.

"You will have to go up on the 'dead boat,' the *Fidelity*, she said, decidedly. "Tell the captain I sent you and it will be all right. That is due at half-past eleven. You don't mind, do you, Miss Marlowe?"

Marion did not even shiver at this ghastly suggestion. She was fast growing acclimated to these daily horrors.

"I guess it won't hurt me," she said with a smile. "I can stay on deck, where I will not see the coffins."

When the *Fidelity* stopped, Marion hurried aboard. She had seen the two pine boxes and wished to avoid them.

"Bring on those silent passengers!" bawled the captain, jovially, and as the coffins were tossed aboard Marion gazed out over the water.

"Who've we got this time?" asked one of the convict sailors after they had started. "We've all got to make this trip some day, boys, and I'm cur'us to know what kind of comp'ny we'll be keepin' up yender!"

He made a motion of his head up the river as he spoke, and Marion sighed as she thought of these strong men looking forward to lying in the pauper graveyard.

"Number 1,197 is Sarah Jenks," read another convict, "and 1,198 is Mrs. Mary Ray, both *en route* via the *Fidelity* for the trenches up yonder!"

As the convict stopped speaking he turned around quickly, for every man on the lower deck seemed to be staring at something.

Right behind him stood Marion Marlowe, her cheeks as white as death, while her beautiful eyes seemed glazed with horror.

"Quick! Let me see that tag!" she whispered sharply. "Oh, I am almost sure you must be mistaken!"

In less than a second there was a guard beside her, but his presence was unnecessary, for not one of the convicts would have harmed her.

"It is Mary Ray, all right," said the guard, showing her the tag. "Do you know her, miss? Has somebody blundered?"

"Somebody has blundered, terribly!" said Marion, more calmly. "That coffin must not be taken to Hart's Island, men. Why, I know

her husband, and such a thing would kill him!"

"It's a wonder she's where she is if he thought so much of her," muttered one of the convicts.

"You don't understand," said Marion, sadly. "It is just as the guard said—somebody has blundered."

The captain was consulted, but he was an obstinate man.

"Can't do it, nurse! I've got orders and I have to obey them! It's government biz. You can't monkey with the government."

"It shall never be buried in Potter's Field," said Marion, pointing to the coffin, "for I will not leave the boat until I have your promise, captain! You must not refuse me! The thing would be too awful!"

"I'll put back, then," said the captain, after a moment's thought. "It won't take a half hour, and I guess it won't matter."

As they neared the dock they could see a group of people waiting for them, among them was Dr. Brookes, waving and shouting frantically.

"You see they want us to come back!" cried Marion, triumphantly. "I told you it was a blunder, and they have discovered it!"

Then the brave, beautiful girl turned suddenly paler than ever before, for there on the dock, with his head bent in grief, stood her friend, Archie Ray, this dead woman's husband.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE END OF THE TRAGEDY.

Marion had kept her promise to watch for Mr. Ray's wretched young wife, and it was her grim determination alone that secured for the poor creature a Christian burial.

Never to her dying day would the brave girl forget the scene on that little dock when the "dead boat" drew alongside with her dreadful cargo.

"Gently, men!" she cried as a couple of convicts lifted the pine coffin. "Remember that all are not so accustomed to these sights as we are, and this poor creature was once a beautiful woman!"

The men heard her silently, but they obeyed her commands. The box was deposited gently, and then the *Fidelity* steamed away again at an order from the official.

Marion's glance swept hastily over the group on the dock. They were mostly attaches of the monstrous prison, but the next instant her gaze rested upon two manly forms, and the pathos of the scene brought tears that blinded her vision. Mr. Ray was standing like on stricken by some fearful blow, his arm resting heavily on Dr. Brooke's broad shoulder.

"Bear up!" whispered the doctor. "You have saved her, Ray! She has come back to you at last, and you must forgive her—in her coffin."

"Poor girl! Poor Mary!"

Mr. Ray's words came brokenly. He had forgotten the great wrong that this woman had done him.

Dr. Brookes had to leave him to give an order about the coffin, and at that instant a young man wearing a press badge came running down from the prison.

One of the guards whom he met turned and pointed toward Mr. Ray, and the next moment the reporter was close beside him.

"Do you mind giving the details of this frightful mistake to the New York *Daily?*" he asked blandly. "Awfully sorry to distress you, sir, but, of course, we would like to have the story."

"I will give them to you," said Marion, stepping up at once. It seemed wicked that this man should intrude upon Mr. Ray at this moment.

The reporter turned to her respectfully, and Mr. Ray thanked her with a look. A moment later he was again leaning on the arm of Dr. Brookes, on his way to the Morgue to identify the body.

Marion told the story as briefly as she could, but as she mentioned the name of Augustus Atherton the stolid reporter gave a long, low whistle.

"He is here, Lawyer Atherton," he said, quickly. "He came up in the boat with me, and he acted like a madman. Every one of us kept our eyes on him—we thought he was going to jump overboard."

"Well, he is a very wicked man!" said Marion, impulsively, "so I don't pity him as much as I do her poor husband!"

"Ray treated her all right for all I can learn," said the reporter. "She was a 'tough proposition,' if you know what that means, but if the father is bad what can you expect from the children?"

As they were walking back to the Penitentiary, Marion remembered the errand that she had been sent on, but she felt sure that the superintendent would excuse her when she heard her story.

At the door of the warden's office even the reporter halted. The scene in the office was almost appalling.

Archie Ray and his father-in-law stood face to face, both pale as death and both glaring at each other.

In an instant Marion knew that there had been hot words between them, and that they were each blaming the other for the day's experience.

"Come, Mr. Ray," she said quickly, darting into the room. "Come away before you break down altogether! That man's words should not annoy you—he is beneath your notice!"

The lawyer glared at her, but did not recognize her for a moment, while Dr. Brookes and the warden looked on in intense amazement.

"How dare you speak like that, miss?" said Angustus Atherton, hotly.

Marion turned and faced him with a look of indignation.

"I dare, because I know I am right," she said, distinctly. "With your own daughter an outcast, a disgrace to her mother and to her husband, you do not hesitate to flatter and mislead young girls, or to compromise and wrong them if occasion offers!"

The lawyer's pale face flushed with shame at her words, and just then Dr. Brookes stepped forward and led her from the office.

"Well said, beautiful Marion!" he whispered, softly. "And said at a time that he will not forget in a hurry! I fancy he will hesitate before he smiles at another young innocent!"

"You must cheer poor Mr. Ray," was the fair girl's only answer, "for while, of course, it is impossible that he should still love his wife, yet there must be memories that make this scene most bitter!"

"I will do my best," said Reginald Brookes, nobly. He had forgotten for the time that this man was his rival.

Marion hurried back to the hospital. She had done her duty. She went at once to the Superintendent of Nurses and told her the whole story.

"What a horrible thing!" was that lady's answer. "Well, my errand will keep, and I can go myself to-morrow."

The next day both Marion and Dr. Brookes got a twenty-four hours' leave of absence. They took the "doctor's boat" together and went over to the city.

"There has been one more tragedy in connection with that poor woman's death," he said, sadly, as he handed Marion an open letter.

"My friend, Dr. Greenaway, has killed himself. It seems he knew Mrs. Ray as 'May Osgood,' and was desperately in love with her."

Marion sighed as she handed him back the letter, which was only a brief account of Greenaway's death, written by his friend, Dr. Fielding.

"How did he hear of it?" she asked, with a little shudder.

Dr. Brookes looked more sorrowful and his face trembled as he answered:

"Why, I learned that she was 'May Osgood before I knew she was Mrs. Ray, and, of course, I wired to Greenaway to come up and identify her. The fellow was already in a frightful state! I don't blame him—it must be awful to love a wicked woman!"

He was looking at Marion so meaningly that her eyes fell before his glance.

"Or a wicked man," she said, softly. "Oh, how I pity my dear friend, Miss Allyn!"

"It has been a strange 'mix up,'" said Dr. Brookes, thoughtfully, "a tragedy, you might say, of New York and Blackwell's Island."

"There are many such, I fancy," was the fair girl's reply.

"More than any one dreams of," answered the doctor, sadly.

When they reached the city they went directly to the flat, and as Dollie met them at the door Marion uttered an exclamation.

Her golden-haired sister was looking radiantly happy, and even young Brookes could almost guess the secret.

"Oh, Dollie, is it settled at last?" asked Marion, as she kissed her.

"I'll answer that question," said Ralph Moore, coming forward.

"Mr. Saunders, my employer, has taken pity on me at last. He has raised my salary to twenty dollars a week, and now there is no reason why we shouldn't be married."

"And I want them to hurry up about it!" cried Bert Jackson's voice, as he and Miss Allyn emerged suddenly from the kitchen.

"Hello! This looks suspicious!" cried Dr. Brookes, laughing. "Dollie and Ralph in the parlor and Miss Allyn and Bert Jackson in the kitchen!"

"Oh, it don't mean anything serious," said Bert, very coolly. "I'm not proposing to Miss Allyn, I'm waiting for Marion."

CHAPTER XIV.

A WEDDING ANNOUNCEMENT.

"Well, of all the cool things that I ever heard!" cried Marion as soon as she could stop laughing.

"Oh, the doctor isn't the only pebble on the beach," went on Bert, gayly. "There are others—Mr. Ray and myself, for instance! Of course, I don't claim to be 'in it' just now exactly, but wait till I get home from college and then, gee whiz! won't I give you fellows a hustle!"

"But perhaps I won't wait," said Marion, mischievously.

Bert shrugged his shoulders with a comical grimace.

"You wouldn't be so mean. I know you, Marion! You'd die an old maid before you'd bring such sorrow to this bosom!"

He clasped one hand over his heart and assumed a tragic attitude. It was plain to be seen that Bert was developing wonderfully.

"You ought to go on the stage, Bert!" cried Dollie, as she shook with laughter. "You'd make a splendid comedian. Oh, you are just too funny!"

"That's what I call 'up-to-date' criticism," said Bert, a little disdainfully. "Right in the middle of my best tragedy she calls me 'funny!'"

"But you certainly would make a splendid actor, Bert," repeated Miss Allyn. "Do let me help you to get an engagement."

"The governor—I mean my newly acquired pop—wouldn't hear of it," said Bert. "He is going to take me on a trip through Canada in a day or two, then abroad for the summer, and goodness knows where else, and then in the fall I go to college to be fitted for the ministry, or something."

There was another shout over Bert's remarks. The idea of his even being a minister was the most amusing thing yet.

"Well, if you were only ordained I would give you a job at once," said Ralph Moore, quickly, "for I am trying to get Dollie to marry me to-morrow."

"Why not to-morrow?" asked Dr. Brookes, gayly. "Both Miss Marlowe and I are on leave of absence! Oh, Dollie, you must be married to-morrow!"

"Of course you can, sister, dear," said Marion, going over to her. "There's no reason in the world why you should wait any longer."

"I'll go straight out and find you a flat," chimed in Miss Allyn, "and you can both stay right here until we get it furnished."

"Then that is settled," said Bert, who seemed to be especially anxious, "and there'll be one big weight off my mind, I can tell you!"

He gave Dollie a glance that no one understood but herself, but the girl's face flushed as she remembered that scene in the carriage.

Almost as if she had read her sister's thoughts Marion Marlowe spoke after the laugh had subsided:

"I shall be glad to feel that you are safe, dearie; that you have a good husband like Ralph to protect you."

"And you, Marion, I wish you did not have to work in a hospital!" cried Dollie, impulsively. "I am sure I don't see how you can endure it!"

Dr. Brookes gazed steadily at the fair girl whom he loved, but the look in her sweet face did not give him encouragement.

"If you knew how much I was needed in a hospital," she said, softly; "how much everybody is needed who is willing to go and work for the unfortunates! Dr. Brookes can tell you what there is to do—what anguish there

is to soothe, and what wrongs are to be righted! Suppose I had not been there yesterday, she said with a shudder, "just think what a hideous thing would have happened!"

It was her first allusion to the awful tragedy, but Marion knew it must come, and she wished to have it over.

"Oh, sister, what happpened?" asked Dollie, instantly.

Even Bert Jackson paled a little as he heard the answer.

"I saved Archie Ray's wife from being buried in Potter's Field! She was on the way there when I found it out; the result is, the poor creature will now have a Christian burial!"

"Great Heaven! How horrible!" cried Ralph Moore, excitedly.

"Oh, Marion, how dreadful!" gasped Dollie, almost crying.

"Thank God she is dead!" was Miss Allyn's low murmur.

"I will tell you about it," said Reginald Brookes, bravely. "Poor Miss Marlowe has borne enough without the pain of this recital."

There was not a sound in the room as he described the fearful scenes, but when Lawyer Atherton's name was mentioned Dollie shuddered visibly.

Ralph put his arm around her, and she leaned her head against his shoulder.

Bert looked surprised and then glad, for he felt sure that Dollie had told him everything.

And so she had, for Dollie was truthful at heart. Now that she had found shelter for her weakness she was almost blissfully happy.

It was Bert who spoke first when the story was ended, for the fine, manly youth was too strong willed to be entirely overcome by a tale of sorrow.

"Well, I am mighty glad that tragedy is ended," he said, very soberly. "I'm glad for the poor woman that she is at rest at last, and I'm glad that Mr. Ray is free from such a creature; but, best of all, I am glad you roasted the old lawyer, Marion, for somehow, ever since I first saw him I've hated the old duffer!"

"Well, I pity him now," said Marion, softly, "for his sin has come home to him at last. There will be nothing but remorse for him in the future."

"I heard some news of him this morning that I forgot to tell you," said the doctor, soberly. "A newspaper reporter who knows him told me that he has left the country. Took a late train last night without even notifying his office. He'll probably remain away until the thing has blown over, for I see they have got it pretty straight in all the papers, especially where they say that he is largely responsible for his daughter's doings."

"Let us try and put all this out of our minds," said Miss Allyn, suddenly. "To-morrow is Dollie's wedding-day, and we must all be happy! I move that we have a song—something rousing and jolly!"

"I second the motion!" cried Bert Jackson, gayly, as with a great show of triumph he offered his arm to Marion.

"I score one," he said joyfully, as he saw the doctor's frown of disappointment. "Got ahead of you that time 'Sawbones,' but you can square it while I'm in Canada!"

"Oh, I never take advantage of an absent foe," said the doctor, laughing, and just then, with a great flourish, Bert opened the piano.

Dr. Brookes had never heard Marion sing, so when the first tones of her magnificent voice fell upon his ear he almost held his breath in surprise and admiration.

Bert Jackson winked at him behind her back, but there was a look on his face that the doctor had never before seen there.

"By Jove!" he thought suddenly, "I believe the boy does love her! Well, why shouldn't he? Who could help it? She is the sweetest, the noblest, the bravest girl in creation!"

Thus ended another tragedy in Marion Marlowe's life—it was a happy termination in spite of some sadness.

Dollie, her darling sister, was married to Ralph the next day, and even Archie Ray and his sister were present at the wedding.

They left the next day for a trip through the South, but not until after they had followed Mary Ray's remains to Greenwood.

There was just one bit of news that distressed them all, and that was that George Colebrook was free again and at liberty to commit such villainies as pleased his base nature.

Lawyer Atherton was never seen nor heard from again, and of course his offices were closed and his employees scattered.

Miss Allyn went on with her newspaper work, and was as loyal as ever to her friends, and with a grateful heart Marion went back to the Island, determined to face bravely any trials that might come to her. As for Dr. Reginald Brookes, he was patient and hopeful. Even the prison seemed a palace whenever Marion, the peerless, entered its portals.

THE END.

In No. 5 of MY QUEEN, issued next week, Marion Marlowe appears as the central character in a new field of action. The story is entitled "Marion Marlowe Entrapped, or, The Victim of Professional Jealousy," and is a story of the most thrilling interest

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

BY GRACE SHIRLEY

NOTE.—This department will be made a special feature of this publication. It will be conducted by Miss Shirley, whose remarkable ability to answer all questions, no matter how delicate the import, will be much appreciated, we feel sure, by all our readers, who need not hesitate to write her on any subject. Miss Shirley will have their interests at heart and never refuse her assistance or sympathy. STREET & SMITH.

"I am in such terrible trouble that I fly to you for advice, and I do hope you will have the kindness to answer my questions. I was at the shore all summer, and I promised three young men that I would marry them. Of course, I only did it in fun, but it seems that they have all taken it seriously. How will I ever get out of such a trying predicament? I do hate to have them know that I was only flirting. EVA L."

The girl who stoops to such unwomanly tricks as the one you mention deserves to be a little annoyed and worried. It seems incredible to us that any girl should make a solemn promise lightly. To be honest, you will be obliged to confess your folly.

"How much can a girl believe of what a man says to her? Please answer this question if you can, Miss Shirley. My gentleman friends are always praising both my beauty and my grace, and, oh, the promises that they make, Miss Shirley! I am constantly being disappointed at their failures to fulfill them. LOTTIE G."

My answer to your first question is this: It depends upon the man. You can believe everything that a gentleman says to you, and but very little of what a knave, a rascal or a *roue* whispers in your ear. Men who praise you to your face are nearly always insincere. Men who make promises easily are apt to forget them easily. We would advise you to discourage these promises at the moment they are made. Do not expect anything from men and then you will not be disappointed. We suppose, of course, that these promises refer to engagements like suppers and the theatre, etc. We cannot imagine what other promises men in general can be making to a respectable young girl. We are almost afraid to read between the lines of your extraordinary letter. We would like very much to see you so that we could understand you better.

"I have taken great interest in reading the correspondence department of 'My Queen,' and I wish to say right here that I know of no one to whom I would rather tell my troubles than the author of 'Marion Marlowe.' If there is such a girl as 'Marion' in the world, I would like to meet her. She is a perfect lady without being prudish or silly. It may sound egotistical, but I think I am a little like Marion. I am not afraid to speak out if I think I am right, and I do not blush or simper over foolish matters. Do you not think that men admire a sensible woman. One who can talk reasonably about love and marriage without squirming, wriggling, blushing and giggling? Most of the girls I know think it proper to appear embarrassed and shy the minute a man makes love to them. I would like very much to hear your opinion on this subject.

"ALMA I. C."

You certainly are very much like "Marion Marlowe," and that is as great a compliment as any girl can have paid to her. Any girl who respects herself can and should talk sensibly about love and marriage, although it is only fair to allow her a few blushes. The natural modesty of a young girl will always make her feel a little shy in the presence of her lover, but she should never allow this feeling to prevent her from discussing the subject of marriage in all its phases with him after they are sufficiently well acquainted. No girl should engage herself to a man until both understand each other thoroughly on these subjects. I am glad you take an interest in "My Queen," as you apparently do, from cover to cover. We can promise you each week a thrilling and instructive story.

"I have read one copy of 'My Queen,' and have sent for the others. I am sure Miss Shirley must be a lovely woman herself to be able to construct the character of 'Marion Marlowe.' I am very much in love with a young man, and for that reason I wish to read all about Marion Marlowe, for I want to see how she talks to her lovers. I am afraid I am a little inclined to be silly, but when one loves very deeply is not this excusable? IDA C."

I am afraid all lovers appear just a little silly to those who have never experienced the "grand passion," Ida, but there is a time and place for everything, even silliness, so if you do whisper baby talk in your beloved's ear you can rest assured that we shall not blame you. I am glad you like "Marion" and that you are studying her character. We intend that she shall be the purest type of American girl. She will be a good model

for all young girls to follow, but we trust that her imitators will have far less trouble in their lives than our unfortunate heroine.

"Ever since I met a certain young man a month ago I have been almost unable to sleep and have lost my appetite completely. Do you think I am in love? He is very handsome.

"AGNES D."

Loss of sleep and appetite do not invariably occur from an attack of the "grand passion," but they have been known to follow in its wake. Perhaps your food is not well chosen, and that you need fresh air and exercise, or perhaps a tonic. People are frequently deceived in matters like the one you mention. I would advise you to study the state of your liver and not lay the blame on your heart until all the other organs have demonstrated that they are perfectly normal.

"I am so much in love that I am positively miserable! I keep thinking that perhaps my lover will prove false or that something will happen that I will never marry him. There is hardly a day or night that I do not picture him dead, and then the tears roll down my cheeks. I cannot help it. Do you think he will ever appreciate such affection as this? Do I not love deeper and harder than any other woman? ETTA W."

We are sorry to hear that your love is making you miserable. Love is the great brightener and beautifier of the world. There should be no instance where it makes one miserable. We are afraid you are just a little morbid, Etta, but do not think for a minute that you are the only little girl who has ever suffered from such fancies. When one loves, one is always anxious about the welfare of the loved one, and a nervous condition like yours always exaggerates matters.

No, we do not believe you are the "hardest" lover in the world. Many women have not only died but given up their lovers, for love, and this, I am afraid, is far beyond your capabilities.

"I was in Boston last week and went canoeing on the Charles River. It is a beautiful spot, and I was astonished at the scores of young girls and fellows who were out canoeing. My chaperone called my attention to the vulgar attitudes of many of the girls who were lying about on the banks, many of them with their escort's arms around them. Of course, being a young girl, I was terribly shocked, yet the spot was so ideal that I could hardly blame them. Do you think it is wrong to yield to such fascinating surroundings? My chaperone would be shocked if I asked her such a question. LORRIE B."

We know exactly how you felt when you saw the vulgar display upon the banks of the Charles River. We have often seen girls and even women lying about on the seashore in unladylike attitudes, but it never occurred to us to excuse them because of "fascinating surroundings." In the first place, your chaperone was foolish to call your attention to it. You might possibly have not noticed it, and she should not have given you the opportunity. A girl or woman who assumes unladylike attitudes in public is a very vulgar person. We can overlook a little love-making and sentiment under such conditions, but anything that borders on vulgarity is not to be tolerated.

"I have been married two years and have lived in a Harlem flat. In the last three days I have had my first quarrel with my husband. We were obliged to move, and he made me do all the packing; dishes, books, and everything, and it nearly killed me. I weigh only a hundred pounds, and am very delicate, while my husband weighs two hundred and is strong and healthy. I have decided to leave him if he ever makes me work so hard again. Do you think I am right? Was he not very inconsiderate? FLORA F. C."

Your husband is probably too stout to do violent exercise himself, and as you are entirely too slender, he should have compromised by having some one to do the work. No woman that we know is fit to do heavy packing, and you should have refused firmly when he asked you, and explained your reasons. If you begin right away, you may be able to educate him before you move again. There is nothing much more disgusting to look upon than a husband who makes a slave of the wife he has taken.

"I am a very young girl, only fourteen and a half, and I have no work and cannot get any. A young man that I know has offered to support me until I can get a position. Do you think it would be wrong in me to take his money? I only need four dollars a week, and he says he can spare it nicely. LIZZIE McC."

We would like very much to have you call upon us at the office of Messrs. Street & Smith before you decide to accept the young man's money. We have no doubt but that he is perfectly honorable and can not blame you for considering his offer in your present distressed condition. Still, as we said at first, we must see you before advising you.

"When I married a year ago my husband was getting ten dollars a week, and we seemed to have no difficulty in paying our expenses. Now he is getting twelve and we are constantly in debt, yet the household expenses are no larger than before. I am sure I do not spend a penny more than I did a year ago. How am I to find out where it goes to? I am sure my husband spends it. FRANCES T."

We would advise you to start a petty cash account and try to get your husband to set down his expenditures. When you have accounted for every penny that you have spent during the week it will be his turn to do the same. If he refuses, you must talk to him kindly and try to show him how necessary it is to keep out of debt. Troubles like that have destroyed the happiness of innumerable families. There is a leak

age somewhere in your husband's pocket-book, but you can only find it with the aid of tact and kindness. If you command him to explain he is likely to be more extravagant than ever.

"I am a saleswoman getting ten dollars a week, and I have a little flat for which I pay fourteen dollars a month. The expenses are pretty heavy, and I am often at my wits' end as to how I shall pay them. A gentleman whom I know is anxious to board with me, and says he will give me five dollars a week for his room with breakfasts. I am eighteen years old and very much in love with this gentleman. Would it be improper for me to take him as a boarder?
"EVELYN T. G."

It would indeed be very improper for you to take the young man to board. Can you not get a nice, congenial girl friend to go in with you and bear half of the expense?

"Will you kindly answer the following questions which are worrying me greatly: How can a girl of fifteen tell when she is really in love, and how old a man ought she to marry? I have two lovers, a boy of seventeen and a man of forty. I like one as well as the other. Which shall I marry? AMY."

We think you would be foolish to marry either. No girl of fifteen is fit to marry. Wait until you are old enough and wise enough to consider such a step, and, above all things, wait until you are sure you are in love. There will be no uncertainty when the right man comes along. You should develop your talents and graces in order to be ready for him.

"Please tell me if you believe in long engagements? I have been engaged nine years, and am beginning to weary of the condition. All of my girl friends are married, and they are all poking fun at me. My lover knows this, still he does not seem to mind it an atom. Is he not unfeeling and unmanly to keep me waiting? ELLEN D."

It is very apparent to us that your lover is not a lover. He is not worthy of the affection of any good woman. If he cannot marry you himself he should take himself out of the way and give some more enterprising man a chance to win you. A nine year engagement must be very stupid. You have our sympathy.

"I am very much perplexed about a simple matter, and I feel sure that you will help me to straighten the tangle. A young man who calls upon me is apparently very much in love with me, yet in spite of the fact that he has been calling for three years, he has never said so much as a word about marriage. I am twenty-five years old and am getting very anxious. If he does not propose pretty soon it will drive me to desperation. ALICE C."

You seem to believe that marriage is the chief end and aim of woman. If you are so anxious to marry you had better "pop the question" yourself or else try to get a new lover who will be more speedy in his declarations. Possibly the young man has not yet made up his mind as to your worth as a wife, or possibly he has not money enough to marry, or some such reason. Rather than distress yourself farther, I should certainly ask him his "intentions." It will at least "straighten the tangle" and show you where you stand. If you were thirty-five instead of twenty-five, there would still be ample time to marry.

"I am anxious to ask you a question, Miss Shirley, and I do hope that you will not think I am silly. I am very fond of kissing, awfully, awfully fond of it, and I hug and kiss my sweetheart just as often as possible. My mother says I am far too forward, and that I will disgust him if I kiss him so often. I should die to lose him, but what can I do? The minute I see him I want to fly at him and kiss him. MINNIE."

My dear Minnie, you are certainly in a very bad way. Have you never heard the adage that "familiarity breeds contempt?" There are men in the world who really enjoy osculatory demonstrations such as you delight in, but there are others who prefer an occasional kiss, and, as your mother says, are disgusted at such frequent outbursts of affection. We would advise you to break yourself of the osculatory habit. An occasional kiss contains far more of the nectar of bliss than the "continuous performance" which you seem to indulge in.

A woman cannot be too chary of her kisses before marriage. After your sweetheart is your husband, we shall feel very differently. If he has stood the fire of your affection and crowned it with matrimony it is safe to suppose that your temperament pleases him.

"Will you kindly tell me how I can prove that my fiance loves me? He often says so, but I have no way of proving that he speaks truly. Ought he not to do some noble deed for me, or are the daily little attentions sufficient proof of his devotion? JANE L."

We think that the "little things" of life weigh far more heavily in the balance than one heroic action. Both men and women do a heroic deed, when occasion requires or permits, merely through the stimulus of danger or the love of excitement, but it is the truly good man who is faithful in the "little things," and smooths the daily life with his thoughtful attentions. We do not think you have anything to fear, as your fiance probably loves you, and he will do the heroic deed if it is ever necessary.

"I am in great distress of mind, and having read your good advice to others, I make bold to come to you in my perplexity. I am not a very good cook, and my husband knew it before he married me. He used to say when he was courting me that anything that was made by my hands would be heavenly. Now he says a woman is a fool who does not know how to cook, and he is

positively profane over some of my dishes. I have tried and tried, and I cannot learn to cook. I do dressmaking beautifully, and make quite a little money. Don't you think he ought to be willing to hire some one to do the cooking?

"AGNES D. B."

We have heard of men like your husband before. They are a species of human being who should not be tolerated. A right-minded man does not marry a woman simply to have her cook for him, and if that is all he cares about you we certainly pity you. We would not advise any good dressmaker to spend her time in learning to cook; neither would we advise a good cook to fritter away her hours in trying to master the art of dressmaking. Every man to his trade, and every woman, too. If you are helping to support yourself, you can certainly do about as you please, and the first thing for you to do is to put a good girl in your kitchen. Perhaps after your husband has partaken of a few well-cooked meals he will be a little more amenable to reason.

"I have been reading the Correspondence Department of 'My Queen' ever since it started, and am going to add my question to the list. Are love and jealousy always inseparable? My lover says they are, and even adds that the greater the jealousy the greater the love, and when I disagree with him he says I do not love him. I should be very glad indeed to hear your opinion.

"EVELYN D."

We do not see how true love can leave room for much jealousy. In order to love truly, one must have confidence, and with this sentiment in the heart jealousy cannot flourish. Naturally a person can feel hurt at any fancied or real slight from a loved one, but to be genuinely jealous is to be suspicious, and this sentiment is not compatible with honest affection. We should be very "shy" indeed of a jealous man. They have never proven themselves very desirable companions for a woman.

"I am deeply interested in 'Marion Marlowe,' and have read the Correspondence in every issue. I would be glad to know who Marion is to marry. I should have married Archie Ray in the very first chapter if it had been me. Do you believe, Miss Shirley, that there are any men like Archie Ray and Dr. Brookes? If there are, I would give a great deal to be able to meet them. The men I know look like mental and moral pigmies in comparison. EVA S."

We can not tell you about Marion yet, for she is a very cautious young lady, and is going to take a long time to decide whom she will marry. Mr. Ray and the doctor are certainly very fine young men, but as they are characters from real life, we are sure there must be others. We would advise you to turn your copies of "My Queen" over to the young men whom you know—perhaps all they need is an example to follow. If you wait a few years with your eyes wide open, we have no doubt but what you will secure a worthy husband such as we are determined to give Marion Marlowe when she shows an inclination to accept him.

"I hope you will not think me foolish for asking your advice, my dear Miss Shirley, but, really, I am very much distressed, and I long for some one to help me. I am a brunette of eighteen and fairly good looking, yet no young man has ever asked me to marry him. Several of my friends have told me that men always prefer blondes, and that if I should bleach my hair my chances would be better. Do you think they are right? I would like to have a lover, and, of course, I hope to be married, but I should feel terrible if I should ruin my nice black hair by bleaching it. Do please advise me what to do in this matter. ADDIE McV."

We do not agree with your friends that men prefer blondes. On the contrary, both types of beauty have their special admirers among the "sterner sex." If you have "nice black hair" you should endeavor to retain it as nothing is more stupid and disgusting than for a woman to attempt to alter a beauty that nature has given her. A true man will not love you for the color of your hair any more than he will for the length of your nose or the width of your shoulders. If you are a modest, intelligent girl, the right man will fall in love with you some day, and then if you had green hair it would not make any difference. You are too young to be thinking of marriage, in any event. Wait until after you are twenty-one before you even think of a husband.

"Faith, it's mesilf as wud loike to ax yez a question, Miss Shirley, av ye plaze! I do be a maid, and a handsome policeman is after makin' love to me. Sure, phwat will I say to him whin he axes me to marry the loikes av him? Me hearrt trimbles so at the thought that me sinsis do be after lavin' me. BIDDY G."

We suspect "Biddy G" has translated her query into brogue as a bit of pleasantry. However, the question asked is quite to the point. If he is a kind, honorable man, we advise you to say "yes," very promptly, Biddy. A good policeman ought to be a handy article to have in the family. He ought to be able to guard a nice little, warm-hearted wife and protect her from all harm. Be sure that his "record" is good, and then the "yes" will come easy; but in the words of your own tongue, "if yez can't say it aisy, say it as aisy as ye can."

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